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TO: MEMBERS OF THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

FROM: RANDI ASHTON-PRITTING, PRESIDENT OF THE CONNECTICUT LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

DATE: FEBRUARY 16, 2010

The Connecticut Library Association (CLA) is a not-for-profit organization representing librarians and library supporters from libraries across the State of Connecticut. During the past couple of years during the severe economic downturn, the members of the CLA have worked very hard with municipal and state officials to keep our libraries open and keep our programs running to meet the ever-growing demand from many, many Connecticut residents for library services. As you know, the budgets for certain Library programs have been cut very steeply during the past couple of budget cycles. However, we are all very grateful to members of the General Assembly for your recognition of the importance of our programs and we appreciate that you have limited and rejected some of the severe cuts that were previously proposed. At this time, Governor Rell is not proposing deep cuts to our programs, and we are hoping that we will be able to hold the line through the current budget negotiations.

The Connecticut State Library, in conjunction with the local municipal libraries, academic libraries and corporate libraries, have all been leaders in developing innovative cooperative programs for use by librarians and library patrons; and we will continue to work with municipal and state leaders to expand our cooperative and regional programs. In both the short run and in the long run, these cooperative programs do help save the State save significant dollars. Without strong and growing consolidated/cooperative programs, the individual libraries must purchase the services on an individual library-by-library basis, which will be more expensive for each library and more expensive for the Taxpayers. Some examples:

- The iConn Statewide Digital Library program. The *iConn* program was appropriated \$1,968,794 but was subject to a recent holdback of \$461,772 (now the appropriation is \$1,507,072). The *iConn* program leverages the power of consolidated/cooperative purchases of software programs for use by public libraries and universities. Because of recent budget cutbacks, the State Library has had to cancel cooperative/statewide database contracts with software vendors and publishers, including contracts for Associated Press Images, Campus Research from Westlaw, the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature and the *Boston Globe* subscription; thus leaving the individual libraries to negotiate (if they can afford to do so) individual – and likely more expensive—contracts with these vendors. We are hoping that the funding for the *iConn* program can be reinstituted/increased so that pursue more consolidated software and research database contracts.

- The *reQuest* Statewide Database program. The *reQuest* program was appropriated \$674,696 but was subject to a recent holdback of \$181,437 (now the appropriation is \$493,259). The *reQuest* program provides a statewide catalog containing information on 22 million items in the collections of schools, public libraries and colleges throughout Connecticut. The *reQuest* program allows patrons to locate and request items from other libraries throughout Connecticut and have these items sent to the patrons' local libraries (thereby saving time and unnecessary gas usage and congestion on our roadways). The *reQuest* program also provides a very low cost, consolidated source of records for local library catalogs, thereby allowing local libraries to benefit financially from the consolidated/cooperative database. Because of recent holdbacks, the State Library is endeavoring to negotiate a new lower-price deal with the vendor; but this will certainly result in reduced services for Connecticut libraries and library patrons.
- The *Cooperating Library Service Unit/Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC)* program was appropriated 350,000 but was subject to a recent holdback of \$84,389 (now the appropriation is \$265,611). The *CLC* negotiates and administers discounts on library books, media, supplies, equipment and scholarly databases. The consolidated/cooperative purchasing power of nearly 900 member libraries (184 public libraries, 586 school libraries, 47 academic libraries, and 27 special/corporate libraries) leverages state money to provide cooperative projects and deep discounts on purchases. For example, In FY 2008, the total *CLC* savings from just 2 of the *CLC* book vendors was \$6.8M (\$6.5M from *Baker & Taylor* and \$347,000 from *Ingram*).
- The *InfoAnytime* 24/7 internet reference service was appropriated \$42,500 but was subject to a recent holdback of \$36,167 (now the appropriation is \$6,333). *InfoAnytime* statewide project had to be cancelled due to loss of funding. A small percentage of libraries have been able to maintain this service for their students and patrons only. We certainly understand that times are tough, but it is indeed unfortunate that this program had to be cancelled statewide. *InfoAnytime* had been receiving approximately 10,000 reference requests, per year from students and researchers who needed assistance when libraries are closed (late nights, weekend nights, and holidays).

Certainly, the members of the Connecticut Library Association are well-aware of the difficult times in which we live and we understand that cuts to our programs must be made. In fact, significant cuts were already made in 2008 (5% rescissions to several programs) and more cuts were made through deficit mitigation legislation in 2009 and as a result of the recent Executive Branch holdbacks. As noted above, the *CLA* members have worked very hard to develop and grow consolidated/cooperative programs, and the *CLA* members will always continue to investigate ways that cooperative programs can leverage the group purchasing power and information-sharing capabilities among libraries. All of these efforts have translated into more resources for library patrons and significant savings for the State's taxpayers.

Thanks to all of you for your support of our Libraries and for your consideration of our position regarding the recent holdbacks.